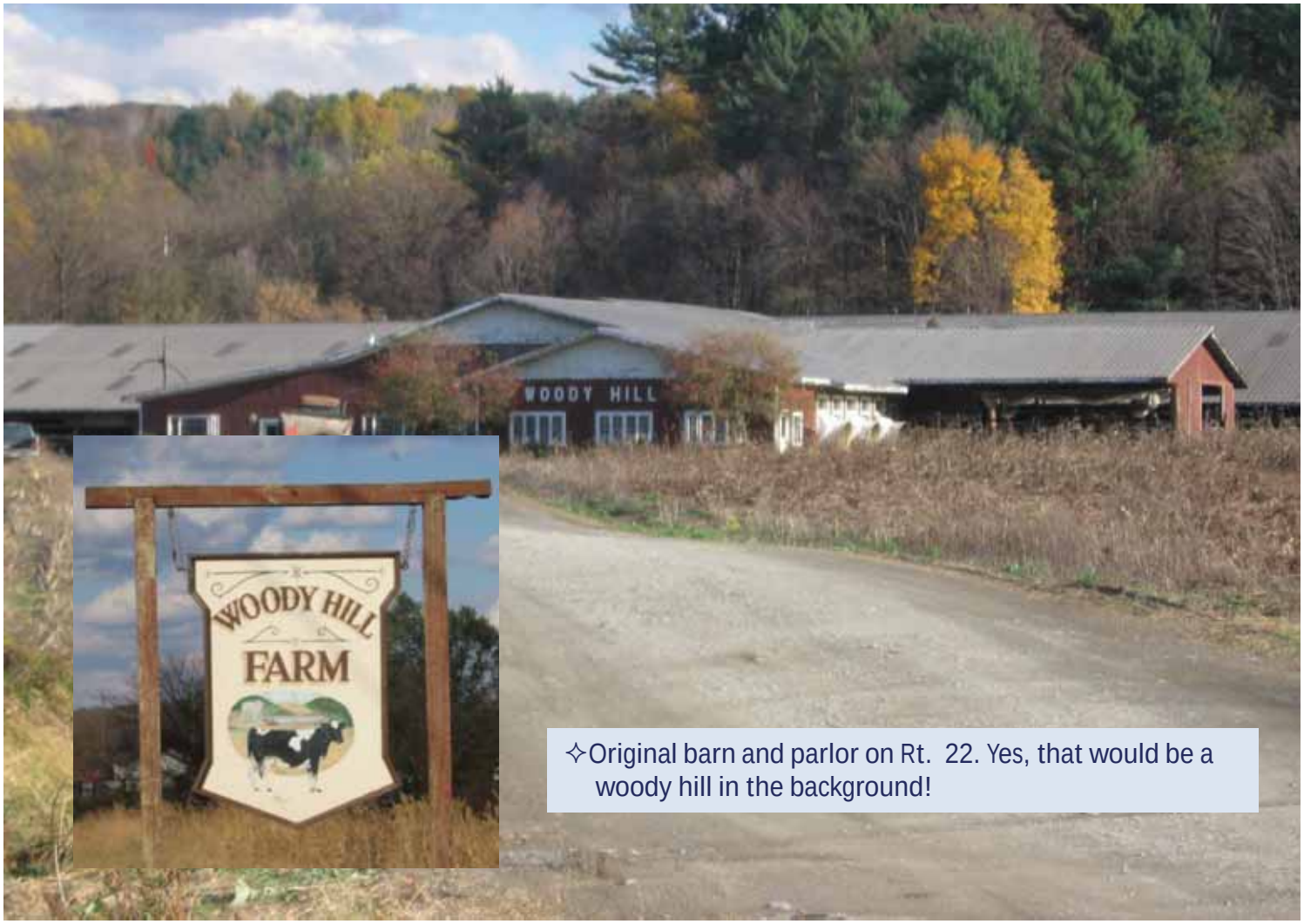
Panelist Profile, Group-Housed Calf Systems

Woody Hill Farm, Salem, NY

Jim and Dan Sheldon, Sheldon Brown , Mark and Jennifer Cary

1000 Cows, up to 144 Calves on Milk

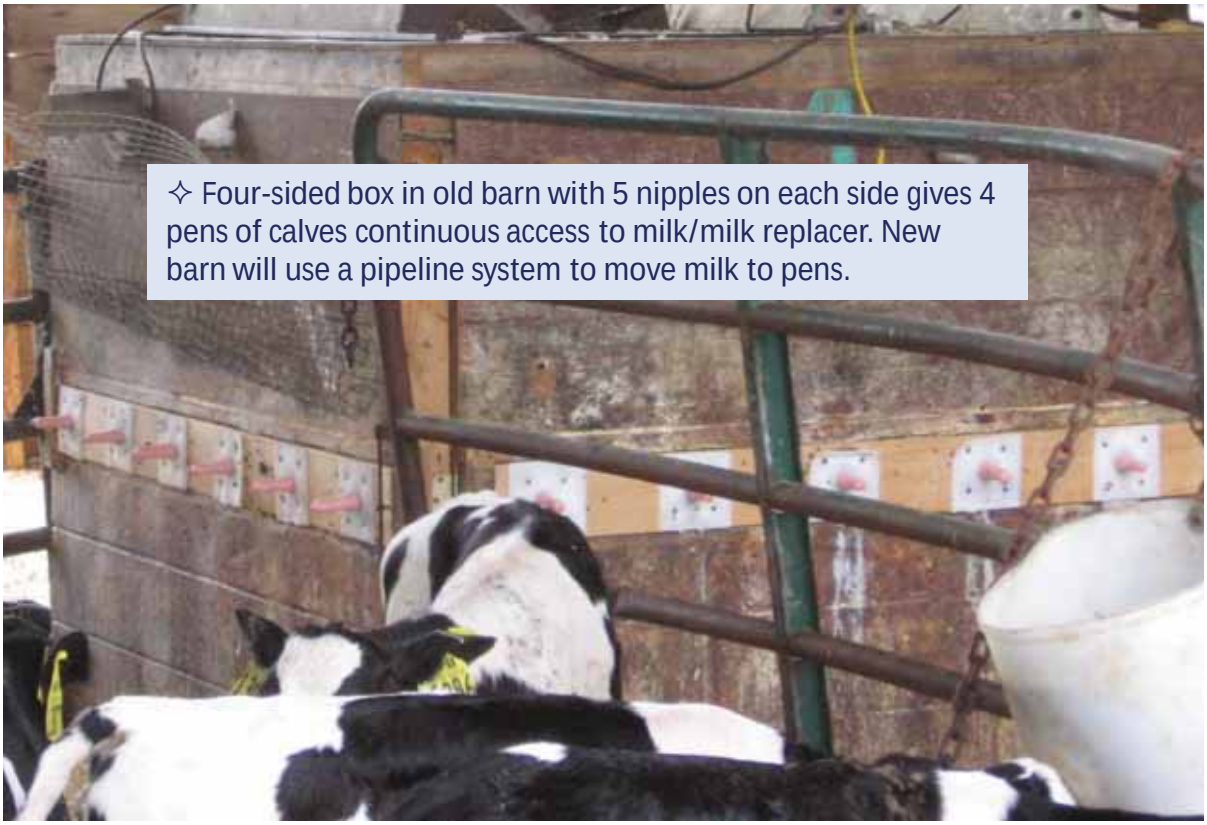


✧Original barn and parlor on Rt. 22. Yes, that would be a woody hill in the background!

✧ Mark with two pens of calves in the old converted commodity barn. The well depreciated building augmented with positive pressure tubes for ventilation allowed them to explore and test the system *before* committing to building a barn specifically for this purpose.

✧ New barn under construction as of October 20th. With a little luck they hope to have this barn populated with calves in time for the December 8th tour date. Milk mixing and handling practices will remain close to the same. Group sizes will be reduced to 10 per pen. Considerably greater control over the calf's environment should afford them a health dividend.

✧ This insulated transfer tank with agitator is filled with acidified waste milk, acidified milk replacer or both from a stationary reclaimed bulk tank. Stabilization occurs in the bulk tank with a controlled release of acidifying agent at the right temperature and with agitator operating. Product fed to calves is very consistent. A reverse float activator in the feeder receiving box triggers the pump to automatically move milk from the transfer tank.



✧ Four-sided box in old barn with 5 nipples on each side gives 4 pens of calves continuous access to milk/milk replacer. New barn will use a pipeline system to move milk to pens.

✧ There is a tendency to “social feeding”. But at times you may see an individual feeding. One of the older calves in this pen (13016) is feeding above one of the younger calves (13035). They are a week apart in age. Within-pen age difference of 10 days will go down dramatically in the new barn with the 10 calves/pen sizing.

✧ View “inside the box”. Tied plastic cover is for fly control. Space heater maintains what they feel is ideal milk temperature, 80^0F. Tubes and nipples are replaced regularly and can be sanitized with modifications to an older CIP system.

✧Not fancy but highly functional grain feeders and hay nibblers hang from gates in pens (old barn). Free choice water is also available in each pen. Water intake is not appreciable until the weaning process begins.

✧ “Milk bar” in first pen at the transition barn helps facilitate weaning. Milk is incrementally tapered to none over 10 days. Increasing grain and water consumption is easily observed.

Summary of Practices – Woody Hill Farm Group Calf System

- **Feeding System Type:** Farm Fabricated "Ad Lib" Feeder
- **Milk Sources:** Acidified Waste Milk **+** Acidified Milk Replacer, 22% Protein 20% Fat
- **Milk Reservoir Sanitation:** 1x/week tubes through CIP, 2x/week transport tank
- **Milk Transport:** Transfer tank from renovated old milkhouse to calf barn, auto refill reservoir
- **Housing:** Converted cold barn to build/test system. Migrating to new cold barn in late November 2011
- **Summer Ventilation:** Open curtains and end walls plus positive pressure tubes (new barn)
- **Winter Ventilation:** Positive pressure "tubes" and manual partial sidewall openings
- **Group Sizes:** 10 (new barn)
- **Digestive Disorder Incidence:** ≤1%
- **Respiratory Problem Incidence:** Old barn <10%, Expected in new barn <2%
- **Baby Calf Mortality:** ≤1%
- **Calf Starter % CP:** 23%
- **Target Calf Starter Consumption at Weaning:** >3 lbs. in calf barn, weaning finishes in Transition Barn
- **Target Age at Weaning:** Start at ~55 days, process takes ~ 10 days.
- **Average % of Birth Weight at Weaning:** 200% (205% adjusted to 56 days)